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ABSTRACT

This study examined characteristics of independent educational consultants, who provide a new and rapidly growing service, as well as characteristics of their clients who use these consultants in their college search process. The study used data from the Consultant Survey, which was mailed to 317 independent educational consultants of whom 157 returned surveys. The study also used data from the Student Survey, a large national survey of first-time freshmen with a total 1993 sample of 296,828 freshmen from over 600 institutions. Of these, nearly 3 percent (n=8,029) had used a private consultant. Analysis of the consultant data found that consultants: are mostly white and female; most have masters degrees; have high school or college work experience (though only 15 percent have worked in college admissions); are located in the Northeast, California, or the Midwest; visit a college campus about every 6 days; and charge by units of service. A college counseling package cost an average of $950, and the consultants' average hourly charge was $86. Data on consultants' clients indicate that they: tend to be advice seekers; usually come from privileged families; are usually white and female; more often attend private high schools; and tend to file more than five college applications. Predictors of consultant service use were father's career, having had remedial work in math, and parents' marital status (students with widowed or divorced parents were more likely to seek consultant services). Includes 10 tables. (Contains 14 references.) (JB)

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Competitive Advantage For Sale: Private College Counselors And The Students Who Use Them.

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Doubletree Hotel, Tucson, Arizona, November 10-13, 1994. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Introduction

College choice is the process by which college aspirants prepare for and apply to colleges, while college access is the process whereby educators, policy makers and administrators attempt to ensure that all individuals eligible for and desirous of college admission, and eventually a college education, are able to do so. Researchers in these domains have made significant contributions to advancing our understanding of the transition from secondary to postsecondary schooling -- e.g., social psychological analyses of choice stages, aggregate analyses of the socioeconomic differentials in college access and attainment, and marketing and policy analyses of student enrollments. Often this individual and institutional coming together has been empirically treated as a process of a technical fit between an individual and a particular postsecondary institution.

We believe that college choice is a more complex social and organizational reality. Recent shifts in institutional responsibilities for assisting students in making their college choices (McDonough and Robertson, 1995), the growth of admissions management practices (McDonough 1994), and the selective access to these advantageous practices by predominantly high-socioeconomic status students have strengthened the contribution this perspective can make to understanding the processes of college choice and college access.

In this paper we will focus on the phenomena of private college counselors, otherwise known as independent educational

consultants (IECs)[1], one of the more interesting sectors of the growth industry of admissions. The purpose of this study is to document who these counselors are, who the IEC users (IECUs) are, and to begin to question the impact of this privatization of college counseling on admissions and equity considerations. Some background information on the recent changes in college admissions that precipitated the use of this new entrepreneurial counseling option will help to set the stage for our study.

Overview of Problem

College admissions, formerly the professional purview of high school counselors and college admissions officers, is now a growing entrepreneurial sector of substantial investment and serious profit. Publishers and software designers have capitalized on a commodification of college knowledge resulting in the tripling of the number of books listed in Books in Print on college choice from 100 books in 1967 to 336 books in 1991 (McDonough, 1994a), and the invention of college choice software, computerized viewbooks, and interactive media that allow students to visit in virtual reality any U. S. campus from their computer terminal and to decide which college is "right" for them.

This commodification of college knowledge extends to knowledge that will enhance a student's college entrance exam performance. In 1993, SAT exam coachings' gate receipts topped $100 million, with the industry leader, the Stanley Kaplan Educational Centers (which is owned by The Washington Post Corporation), garnering between 60-80% of this profit. However, this phenomena is not limited to economically advantaged

[1] We will be using these two terms interchangeably although we would like to note that these professionals prefer to be called independent educational consultants. Our study is concerned with that component of IECs' work that is related only to college counseling. To emphasize the point that IECs are a private, not a public or institutional resource, we will also use the term private college counselor.

students since close to half (44%) of all first-time freshmen take some kind of SAT preparation course (Astin et al., 1993).

College applicants, especially upper-middle class students, have been engaging in a whole new range of admissions management behaviors to maintain a competitive edge and deal with anxiety about getting into college and into the "right" kinds of colleges. A quarter century ago, 50% of all students filed one application and only a small proportion of students (7.5%) felt the need to cover their bases by filing five or more applications (Dey et al., 1991). In contrast in 1993, 29% of students had filed one application and the number filing five or more had grown to 22% (Astin et al., 1993). Among educationally privileged students, those figures are higher: 50% of all students at elite institutions and 70% of all students whose fathers have at least a bachelor's degree filed six or more applications (Horvat and McDonough, 1994).

In addition to the aforementioned admissions entrepreneurial sector changes, we have witnessed changes in the institutional sectors of high schools and colleges. Traditionally, students making the transition to college have relied on high school college counselors and college admissions officers. However, there have been many changes in those professions which raise serious concerns about who students today can turn to for help.

Over the last three decades we have seen marked improvement in the ratio of secondary school guidance counselors-to-students: from 1:2403 in 1960 to 1:509 in 1990 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992). Simultaneously, the expectations of what activities appropriately fit into a high school counselor's bailiwick has dramatically changed. As part of a larger phenomena of turning to schools to handle social ills, today's school counselor can be expected to focus substantial effort on:

dropout, drug, pregnancy, and suicide prevention, as well as sexuality and personal crisis counseling.

After these needs have been met, then at least public high school counselors may have time for college choice advising. A decade ago, researchers found that counselors were devoting only 20% of their time to college guidance (Chapman and De Masi, 1985). Today, ten of the largest urban public high schools have effectively divested themselves of college advisement with average high school counselor-to-student ratio of 1:740 (Fitzsimmons, 1991). Some states, notably California where the counselor-to-student ratio is 1:1040 students, offer less advisement than those largest inner city schools. However available college counseling is in America's high schools, it appears as though students find it less than overwhelmingly useful. According to one survey of undergraduates college decisionmaking processes, 60% of 1993 freshman said that the advice of their high school counselor was not very important to them (Astin et al., 1993).

Finally, we have shifts in the profession of college admissions officers. Although the number of college admissions officers has grown exponentially, their trainings and task orientations have taken on a decidedly marketing emphasis, downplaying their former role of educator dedicated to assisting students make the transition from high school to college. Because of exigencies born of maintaining a steady and fiscally healthy freshman class, admissions officers are far more oriented to their recruitment, selection, and enrollment management task functions (McDonough and Robertson, 1995).

Moreover, in identifying characteristics desirable in admissions staff members, chief admissions officers identified marketing as the number one course background and said they sought staff who were friendly, poised

and willing to travel over staff who possessed strong educational beliefs or previous teaching or counseling experience (McDonough and Robertson, 1995). Thus the other institutional resource formerly available to help students in making their college choices which would enhance their personal and intellectual development are otherwise occupied with the marketing tasks necessary to help colleges secure needed monetary resources.

Thus, college applicants are left on their own to navigate the often turbulent waters of this American rite of passage, the college choice process. Different groups have different strategies for dealing with this abandonment. Many students have looked to private avenues for college advice. One solution to this situation is for families with the requisite resources to enroll their students in private high schools where college counseling is a priority. Some low-income, first-generation and minority students have available to them advocacy programs like Upward Bound and others which attempt to provide students with the support structures to prepare for and apply to college. Admittedly these programs are meagerly funded and serve a tiny proportion of the students in need.

Increasingly, upper-middle class students employ the services of private counselors. This paper focuses in on the changes in college access that have to do with the privatization of college choice assistance, counselors-for-hire who assist students through the college choice process and provide them with: 1) specialized knowledge and assistance, 2) uninterrupted time with a counselor, 3) organization and management of the college choice process, and 4) cooling out of unreasonable aspirations with viable, personalized alternatives (McDonough, 1994). We believe that these consultants and the students they assist are collectively

changing the taken-for-granted process of college application behavior in the 1990s.

Specifically, there are three environmental factors which we believe are closely linked to the rise of the entrepreneurial advising sector: the boom in college marketing in response to anticipated enrollment declines, an increased competition for college seats, and public high schools' virtual divestment of the college advisement function. Independent educational consultants fill in some of the gap created by the lack of college counseling in high schools.

Theoretical Framework

This research is part of a larger research project using a Bourdieuian field analysis to provide evidence on how the interinstitutional transition from high school to college can be better understood by simultaneously viewing changes in applicant behavior, high schools, colleges, and the entrepreneurial sector. This integrated analysis accounts for the reciprocal influence of individuals and institutions and illuminates the dynamic interactions of student behavior and admissions professionals' practices.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, fields are definable areas in which people struggle over capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic). Fields are structured by their own histories, internal logics, patterns of recruitment and reward, as well as by external demands. Fields are constantly transformed by their participants because once a large numbers of actors gain a large amount of capital, those actors influence and eventually change the structures. Bourdieu's field framework suggests that as the numbers and types of people attending college has increased, competition has increased, the means that economically-advantaged students use to gain access

to college have changed, and the impact of those new means has been to change the terms of competition, especially at the most selective colleges. In other words, the terms of interaction and competition for the scarce resource of a college education or particular type of college education, have been redefined.

Cultural capital is an important form of capital and is often used to transform aspirations into more valued educational credentials. For example, from the earliest ages students from high socioeconomic status backgrounds are focused on maximizing their schooling opportunities and on using all of their available capital resources to help in that status maximization (Lareau, 1989). Individuals are "optimizers" who strategize about how to maximize cultural capital (DiMaggio, 1979) using their habitus, a social-class-based set of subjective perceptions that shapes expectations, attitudes and aspirations and generates: 1) common aspirations about good college choice outcomes and 2) social-class based strategies about how to secure desired outcomes, in this case, admission into a "good" college. In today's upper middle class world, students' habiti include: being focused on making a good college choice because your undergraduate experience positions you for good graduate school and job opportunities; hiring a private counselor; supplementing that counselor's advice with the advice of the high school counselor and teachers; spending considerable time in clubs and student organizations for their potential to fill out your admissions profile; taking SAT coaching courses; getting remedial help in academic areas of relative weakness, etc. These activities constitute the norms, expected patterns, or tastes of this social class around this issue, and is an example of habitus.

The overriding importance of a field analysis is in directing our concurrent attention to many sectors---high schools, colleges, and the entrepreneurial arena---and then asking if and how equality of access has been affected as the available cultural resources used in the college admissions process has changed. Specifically, we are asking: why have IECs developed, for whom do IECs provide their services, how does the use of IECs vary by social class or ethnicity, and how have IECs affected students' college application behaviors?

Research Questions

This study documents independent educational consultants' demographic and professional backgrounds, the scope of their services and practices, and how they view the students who use their services. This study also details the characteristics of students who use independent educational consultants and explores the predictors of this behavior. The two primary questions guiding this study are: 1) Who are the independent educational consultants; and 2) who are the students who seek their services? A primary concern undergirding this research project is how does this case of privatization of college counseling affect college access and equity in general?

Prior to this study, IECs have been an unstudied occupational group and information about who the students were who used private counselors was anecdotal and unkind. We began with an exhaustive review of the periodical and professional literatures, from which we discovered that independent educational consultants were believed to be clustered mostly in large U. S. cities, near prestigious colleges, more affluent suburbs, and some international locations. Consultants were believed to have high school guidance or college admissions experience

and to offer students significant help with essay writing and SAT coaching. Students who used the services of private counselors were believed to be academically marginal, to come disproportionately from private prep schools, and estimates were that out of the annual 1.5 million first-time freshmen in the U.S., maybe 10,000 used IECs.

Methodology

In order to understand the phenomena of both students and counselors and to capture comprehensively and feasibly the requisite information, our data were drawn from two national surveys: the Consultant Survey is the first-ever, national survey of independent educational consultants which we developed, piloted, and disseminated; and the Student Survey [2] data comes from the 1993 annual freshman survey of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). This survey is the longest on-going study of first-time freshmen in the nation and is conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA.

Consultant Survey

Using the membership lists of the two cognizant professional associations (the National Association of College Admissions Counselors and the Independent Educational Consultants Association), regional admissions associations, word of mouth referrals and snowball techniques, we surveyed all the independent educational consultants we could identify throughout the country. An eight-page, 53-question survey instrument was distributed to 317 self-identified independent educational consultants in April 1993. After a follow-up to non-respondents and post-card reminders, responses were received from 55% of the original sample. The

[2] Both surveys offer data on students and the data from both surveys were compared and found to offer similar information. We will be reporting here on only the data from the annual freshman survey because it is more complete, is a self-report from students, and has a larger sample size.

analytical sample used in this portion of the study consists of 157 independent educational consultants.

Among the many items included on the questionnaire, respondents were asked to report on their backgrounds, their practices, and their clients. Questions on the IECs' race, gender, and region where the practice is located yielded demographic data. Data on the IECs' backgrounds were obtained from questions about IECs' education and prior work experiences. Questions about the services offered, why students used those services, how the IECs charged their clients, and the size of their operation supplied data about the nature and scope of their practices. Data on the IECs' clients were gathered from questions about the race, gender, and family income of their clients.

Student Survey

By adding a single question to the CIRP annual freshman survey to determine how many and what kinds of students used the services of a private counselor, we subsequently were able to access CIRP's wide spectrum of demographic, attitudinal, as well as cognitive and affective outcomes associated with college attendance. In addition to students' self-reported information, their SAT scores and institutional data were obtained directly from the participating institutions.

The total sample for the 1993 survey is 296, 828 freshmen from over 600 institutions of higher education. All frequency data are drawn from this group. Nearly three percent of the total sample (n=8,029) actually used private counselors in their planning for college, but analyses are not restricted to these students. Rather, both those students who used private counselors (IEC Users or

IECUs) and those who did not (non-IECUs) are examined in order to provide a comparative study. Accordingly, cross-tabulation and regression analyses are based on data from all students[3] who responded to each survey item corresponding to the variables under investigation in each procedure.

Given the scope of the CIRP database, the results reported here are preliminary. Our continuing research agenda includes analyses of IEC usage by the selectivity of college attended. Both IECUs and non-IECUs were profiled through extensive frequency analysis of variables related to students' cultural capital and family status, high school and college application habitus, demographic variables for students, and high IEC-density states, in accordance with the theoretical framework we used to design this study. (See Table One.)

Based on analysis of frequency data, cross-tabulations were used to augment the descriptive profiles of IECUs. Five sets of variables were examined through this statistical procedure, IEC use by: 1) whether high school counselor's advice was sought to assess students' differences in advice-seeking behavior; 2) level of parental income to substantiate the hypothesis that IECUs come from privileged families; 3) SAT score by level of parental income and 4) high school GPA by level of parental income to address the negative yet prevalent notion that IECUs are academically marginal students with wealthy parents (what has been referred to as "dumb rich kids"); and 5) number of applications filed by parental income to address the issue of differing college application behaviors. Chi-

[3] Only data for students attending four-year institutions were included based on previous results indicating that few IECUs attend two year colleges. Given our theoretical framework, we expected that IECUs would be focused on four-year colleges, and specifically, more prestigious institutions.

square results ($p<.001$) were referenced to ensure we were looking at variables with statistical association to IEC use.

Next, logistic regression analysis was used to model the dichotomous outcome of students' use and non-use of IECs. Based on the frequency results obtained initially which indicated differences between IECUs and non-IECUs, 39 independent variables were selected for entry into the equation. They were divided into two blocks which were subsequently entered into the equation in a stepwise manner: Block 1 contains 22 variables pertaining to students' background, and Block 2 contains seventeen variables relevant to students' high school experiences (see Table Two).

To examine the effect of IEC use on the number of college applications filed, stepwise linear regression analysis was used. Sixty-two independent variables (including the dummy variable of whether or not students used an IEC) were blocked according to the same criteria stated above and examined (see Table Three). Since the ICE-use variable entered the equation, (hereafter labeled main regression), further analyses were conducted to address the issue of interaction effects.

To look at interaction effects on the number of applications filed, the sample was divided into IECUs and non-IECUs, and separate regression equations were run for each sub-sample for comparative purposes. All independent variables entering the main equation predicting the number of applications filed were forced by blocks into these two secondary regression equations.

Results

Consultant Survey

A preliminary profile of the independent educational consultants, their practices, and the services they provide has been compiled from the results of means, frequencies, and cross-tabulations. Table Four presents the detailed profiles, including gender comparisons.

Professional Issues: Independent educational consulting is a white, female-dominated profession: 98% of all IECs are white and 76% are women. Our sample contained only one Asian-American, one African-American, and one Latino IEC. It is hard to imagine a comparable U.S. profession with a single racial/ethnic profile.

The modal educational attainment (61%) of IECs is a masters degree, with another fifth of IECs attaining a Bachelor's degree, and 17% having doctorates as their highest degree. Although IECs come from varied educational and mental health work backgrounds, more IECs come with high school work experience than with college work experience. A little over a third of all IECs have been high school counselors, while a little less than a third (32%) have high school teaching experience, and 19% report having been high school administrators. Yet only 15% of the IECs report having any previous college admissions experience. However, what is of serious concern to us is that 6% of all IECs currently work in a college admissions office apparently finding no conflict of interest in this arrangement.

IECs are drawn to their profession for various reasons, however the most cited are: the potential to help clients, the use of specialized knowledge, autonomy, the freedom to work at home, and money. Over four-fifths of all IECs reported that the potential to

help clients and the use of specialized knowledge were very important to their becoming an IEC. Only 13% of IECs cited money as a very important reason for becoming an IEC.

Most IECs belong to professional associations: 61% belong to the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC), 70% belong to Regional ACACs, and 44% of the sample belong to the Independent Educational Consultant Association (IECA). The lower participation rate in IECA may be a result of: it having more stringent membership requirements; it is a newer organization than NACAC; and, admissions professionals recognize NACAC over IECA as the more important professional association. Two thirds of all IECs report that they attend the NACAC and/or Regional ACAC conferences, while just under half reported they attend IECA conferences. IECs belong to these associations primarily for: information and resource sharing (84%), contact with others in the field (81%), to gain insight into improving their practice (67%), and legitimacy (61%).

Operations: Consulting practices vary from IEC to IEC. This section profiles IECs in terms of: the length of time in existence, incorporation status, where located, staff size, advertising practices, charges to clients, pro-bono work, and caseload size. Although a few IECs have been in business since 1972, the majority of practices have sprung up since 1983. Only one-fifth of all IECs are legally incorporated, and only 3% of those are incorporated as non-profits. IECs are clustered in three areas in the United States: almost a third of all IECs are located in the North East, 27% in California, and 14% in the Mid West. The rest of the sample are about evenly distributed throughout the US. IECs visit a college campus approximately

every six days (61 visits per year), and generally (85%) do not bring students along with them.

On average, IECs conduct three-quarters of their work in the college advising arena, while the rest of their practice is devoted to pre-high school and other types of counseling. One fifth of all IECs are exclusively engaged in college counseling and those IECs are four times more likely to be incorporated, tend to work more out of their home, and to be highly involved with regional admissions professional organizations rather than national groups.

IECs charge their clients by varying units of service. Over 76% of all IECs offer a college counseling package, with an average charge of $950. The average hourly charge is $86, while the average per visit charge is $150. The average caseload is 41 college-bound students. Two-thirds of the first contact with an IEC is made by parents, and most of those parents find their way to an IEC via word of mouth reference. IECs report that 95% of clients hear about their services from current or former clients. IECs who do advertise use: the yellow pages of the phone book (46%), fliers (37%), newspapers (33%), magazines (13%), and television or radio (4%).

Forty percent of IECs report that they are in a solo practice, and three-quarters work by themselves or with no more than 2 other professionals. Of the four-fifths of IECs who conduct some pro-bono work, the two most favored types of pro-bono work are low-income students (67%), and underrepresented minorities (44%).

Types and Utility of IEC Services: IECs, by any measure, are more available and spend more time with college-bound students than any type of high school counselor. The majority of IECs spend between 11 to 14 hours with a client and 91% of IECs report that they

are available (both by phone and in-person) to clients during off-hours, such as on evenings or weekends.

IECs were asked what services their clients found most useful. (See Table Five.) Students' views (as reported by IECs) of the top IEC services are: compiling a list of possible colleges, alleviating anxiety, narrowing a list of schools, help with special circumstances (such as learning disabilities), help with meeting deadlines, and help with managing peer pressure. Strikingly, over 85% of IECs do not view SAT coaching as a significant service and 57% do not offer it at all.

Gender Differences: Women IECs are clustered at the lower end of degree attainment, with almost three times as many women having bachelor's degrees as their highest degree than men, and 7% more of the doctorates being held by men. Male IECs are more than twice as likely to be incorporated than female IECs. Home-based practices tend to be favored by women, while men tend to favor the non-home-based office . This may be due to the importance for men to separate the personal and public spheres whereas women may like the mixture of home and business or may like providing a more nurturing atmosphere for their clients.

Surprisingly, women charge more than men which is interesting given that in other fields women, on average, earn 72 cents for every male dollar. Before claiming gender equity, it should be noted that women IECs see fewer clients but spend more time with them and this may be why women charge more for their services. Also, women IECs conduct more pro-bono work than men, and are more focused on the emotional tasks of their work: women felt that alleviating the pressure from the college selection process

was more important than their male counterparts and were twice as likely as their male peers to think that the managing of peer pressure was important.

Student Survey Results

CIRP results indicate 2.7% of all first-time full-time freshmen use independent educational consultants. Given that the first-time full-time population numbers 1.5 million, this indicates 40,500 students use private counselors. This figure is more than four times any previous estimate of the scope of this phenomenon. The size of this phenomenon is important because IECUs are assumed to be mostly full-tuition paying, and therefore an extremely sought-after student population in an era where need-blind admission is disappearing.

Initial frequency results point to an IECU population of moderate-ability students who tend to be above average students (60% with B+ averages or better and 72% with SAT scores above 1000) and who are seeking to make themselves more marketable in the highly competitive process of selective college admissions. This debunks the myth that these students are academically marginal.

Three primary trends emerge from initial frequency results: 1) IECUs are advice seekers; 2) they are from privileged families; and 3) their college application behaviors differ from other first-time full-time freshmen. Comparative findings of IECUs versus non-IECUs are presented in Table Seven. Furthermore, IEC usage (just like IEC professionals) is an overwhelmingly Caucasian phenomenon (83.5%) with a slightly higher percentage of occurrence among females (52%). Also, IECUs are predominantly from the east and west coasts

with homestates of New York (13.9%), California (13%), New Jersey (10.3%) and Massachusetts (6.6%) being most prevalent.

Results from the five cross tabulations support and augment the trends highlighted above. First having established IECUs as advice seekers, we examined one facet of this profile and addressed the issue of whether this behavior varied by type of high school attended. By looking at IECUs who also sought their high school counselor's advice in planning for college, it became clear that this behavior transcends institutional type and control. Of IECUs at public high schools, 69% also sought out their high school counselor's advice; at private denominational and non-denominational high schools the figures are 73% and 83% respectively. Not only does this behavior transcend high school type, but it is common practice among these students. It should be noted that, IECUs attend private, non-denominational high schools (13.0%) at more than twice the rate of non-IECUs (5.7%). Among the most prevalent private, non-denominational high schools are prep schools which currently set the standard for college advising and the counselor-to-student ratio at these schools is 1 : 65 (Cookson and Persell, 1985). Clearly, those who currently have the most college guidance feel they need more advice and are seeking it.

The parental income variable proved to be invaluable in establishing IECUs as coming from privileged backgrounds. Basic two-way cross-tabulations of IEC use by parental income revealed a positive, rapidly increasing relationship with over 10% of the students with annual parental income greater than or equal to $200,000 using IECs. Having established that these students come from privileged backgrounds, we controlled for the effects of

parental income on these students' SAT composite scores and high school GPAs. At every parental income bracket of $50,000 and above, there is a higher percentage of IECUs reporting SAT scores over 1000 (mean difference is +3.7%). However, there is a higher percentage of IECUs than non-IECUs recording GPAs at B- or lower (mean difference is +3%). Nonetheless, almost 80% of IECUs are B students or better, and their SATs are slightly higher than their counterparts at every income strata. Through these comparisons, a more accurate profile of IECUs academic ability above and beyond the effects of parental income were obtained. IECUs are not the mythical "rich, dumb kids;" rather, while they are from economically advantaged families, they are academically stronger students than the myth portrays.

Results from the final three-way cross tabulation analysis draw together the effect of IECUs' privileged background on one aspect of their college application behaviors: number of applications filed. As indicated by earlier frequency data, 29% more IECUs filed five or more applications than did non-IECUs. When controlling for parental income, this trend is still evident. In fact, when focusing on those filing six or more applications, IECUs surpass their non-IECU counterparts by a 24% margin. Keeping in mind that IECUs tend to be admitted to their first choice institutions less often, it seems likely that they might be aiming higher and seeking to gain admission to more selective colleges than non-IECUs.

Having empirically established the general characteristics of IEC users, we attempted to determine what explains students' use and non-use of private counselors. Several powerful predictors of this phenomenon -- namely father's careers, living in high IEC-

density areas, and having had remedial work in math -- were identified through logistic regression (N=128,554). Table Eight depicts the percentage change in odds of students using IECs based on the 22 independent variables that entered the regression. While the effect of parental income after controlling for other factors is still strong (16.4%), its effects have been mediated through fathers having careers as doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. Of particular note is the tremendous effect living in California has (138.5%) on students' use of IECs. We believe this speaks to the proliferation of IECs in this state, the extremely high student-to-counselor ratio in the public high schools, and what has become the taken-for-granted nature of using private counseling among a certain strata of college-bound students in this state.

The influence of parents' marital status on IEC use is also noteworthy. If either or both of the parents are deceased (46.9%), or if they are divorced or separated (16.4%), students are more likely to turn to IECs for assistance in planning for college. Considering the host of time-management, pressure-minimizing, and helping services these consultants provide, this finding may indicate that IECs serve a semi-parental role in students' college planning process.

While the results reported up to this point have carefully established a profile of IEC users, the fundamental concerns regarding privatization and equity in the college admissions process require answers to the question, "What difference does IEC usage make?" By looking at the number of college applications filed as an outcome variable, the impact of IEC use on one critical aspect of the college admissions process was accomplished. Of the 62 variables

entered into the step-wise regression analysis, 41 actually entered the equation with a final R^2 of .13 (see Table Nine). Student background variables account for 8% of the total variance with father's education entering as a positive predictor at the first step. Most germane to our question at hand is the fact that IEC use entered as a positive predictor at step 21. Therefore, even after controlling for the effects of parental education, income, and occupation, IEC use tends to increase the number of college applications filed by students.

Results from the separate regressions for IECUs and non-IECUs indicate differential effects of five variables on the number of applications filed (see Table ten). Non-IECUs who are from Massachusetts, are Latino, spend six or more hours per week talking with teachers outside of class, and attend a private non-denominational high school have a greater likelihood of filing more applications. These same variables have negative effects for IEC users. Higher self-ratings in math ability tend to increase IECUs' likelihood of filing more applications, but it decreases the phenomena for non-IECUs. Considering the other 34 variables not exerting differential effects on IECUs and non-IECUs, the most salient result of the linear regressions remains the actual bearing IEC use has on the number of applications filed.

Limitations

Because of the demands of regression analysis, a meaningful but constraining temporal order was forced upon a college choice process which is free-flowing in real life. We believe that our blocking of variables represents a process that is consistent with our

Bourdieuian theoretical framework and is also consistent with accepted college choice models.

Discussion

Privatization: There has been very little discussion of privatization in the postsecondary arena, partly because we have long had a dual system of private and public colleges and unlike the precollegiate sector, federal financial aid belongs to the student not the institution. However, there is an important privatization phenomenon happening in the field of college admissions.

Privatization can take four forms, only one of which applies to the privatization of college counseling: the entry by private producers into markets that were formerly public monopolies. (Goodman and Loveman, 1991:28) Under the privatization of college access, trusted public servants (high school guidance counselors) are replaced by private entrepreneurs (independent educational consultants) who are driven by bottom-line financial considerations. IECs serve those students who know about them and are able and willing to pay for private counseling.

The privatization of college counseling is a serious organizational change because of its long-term impact and consequences. With a national average of one guidance counselor per 527 students, high schools have divested themselves of any real responsibility for college counseling but private service providers have picked-up the slack. In privatization debates, ownership of a service per se is not as important as accountability to the public's goals which go beyond fiscal considerations. In the arena of college access, the public's goals include fair access to social goods, optimal deployment of human talent, and distributive justice. The 97% of

college students who did not use private counselors still had limited access to school counselors and this poses a serious concern, particularly for those students who are the first-generation in their families to be college-bound. Implications of this are that resources, information, and cultural capital are accumulated further by those who already have it. In other words, it takes economic capital to buy IEC time and to gain the cultural capital of a college education.

One issue is how private counselors behave and are monitored. Nine out of ten IECs surveyed desire a required minimum credential, they obviously want some kind of monitoring or regulation. However, credentialling speaks only to the monitoring process and not to the accountability issues.

In other domains where privatization has occurred, the best way to encourage private managers to serve the public interest is through competition among potential providers, governmental entities and private entrepreneurs alike (Goodman and Loveman, 1991). We believe that the focus of the privatization of college counseling debate should be on the nature of the organizational changes in the entire field of college access and on how to ensure accountability and consonance with the public's interests.

Significance

We believe that our findings are strengthened by obtaining similar results on student characteristic variables from two entirely different surveys. By comparing selected results (i.e. race, gender, high school type, parental occupation and income, etc.) of the Consultant and Student Surveys, we found that the data were comparable (See Table Six). The differences were slight, except on two variables: parental occupation and family income. We believe

that the differences in parental occupation may be due to the vastly different wording of the measures on the two surveys, while the difference in the reporting of family income may be a function of the distance IECs have from the intimate details of the family, as compared to the students.

Also significant is that 3% of the college-bound high school students in America today have their access to college enhanced by the use of a private resource. Most often, these are the students who already have other private resources---parents who are college-educated, SAT coaching and other remedial assistance, etc. Although 3% is not a larger percentage, it is significant if these students have disproportionate access to better, more elite colleges. Elite colleges themselves have enormous influence over the postsecondary and secondary systems even though they only enroll 2% of all college students.

Furthermore, given the precarious future of need-blind admissions and the current financial pressures facing higher education (Graham, 1994), IECUs are becoming increasingly important to colleges and universities as they often are full-tuition paying students. Therefore, these students' college choice behaviors which form the basis for this study are increasingly important phenomena to investigate.

Future Research Agenda

IEC Usage Impact: One of our questions that we currently can not answer is: What is the actual impact of these independent educational consultants on the admissions outcomes of the students who use them? Do these students get into schools where they otherwise might not have been able to gain access? Although we

currently can not answer these questions as framed, we are now engaged in additional analyses based on the selectivity of college attended in order to assess the impact of IEC usage on college access.

This research offers a number of implications for practice also. Dialogues in the high school counseling and admissions professional communities are needed and should be focused on whose responsibility it is to assist students in making the transition from high school to college. Private counselors are providing a needed service. The fact that this phenomenon has taken root attests to the need. Those of us interested in maintaining equal access to college need to ask additional questions about how we can assure all students of the assistance they need in applying to college, especially those who are first-generation college bound and underrepresented minorities.

TABLE 1: VARIABLES USED IN ANALYSES OF IECUs

I. REGRESSION VARIABLES*

Cultural Capital/High Status Variables:

Parental Education[1,1]
Parental Income[1,1]
Studied in a Library[2,2]
High school GPA[2,2]
SAT composite score[2,2]
Parental Careers[1,1]
Visited Art Gallery/Museum[2,2]
Had remedial work in math[2,2]
Had remedial work in English[2,2]
Self-Ratings[0,3]

Habitus Variables:

High school type[2,2]
Was a guest in a teacher's home[2,2]
Highest degree planned[2,2]
Hired IEC[2,2]
Sought h.s. counselor's advice in planning for college[2,2]
Studied with other students[2,2]
Felt overwhelmed[2,2]
Hrs/week talking with teachers[2,2]
Hrs/week in student clubs, orgs.[2,2]

High IEC-Density Variables:

Homestate: CA[1,1]
Homestate: MA[1,1]
Homestate: NY[1,1]
Homestate: CT[1,1]
Homestate: NJ[1,1]
Homestate: PA[1,1]

Sorter Variables

Gender[1,1]
Parental Marital Status[1,1]
Race[1,1]

II. FREQUENCY VARIABLES

Cultural Capital/High Status Variables:

Methods of Financing College
ACT score

Habitus Variables:

Career aspirations
Distance from college to home
Full-time student status
Number of applications filed
Future Expectations
Reasons for Going to College
Reasons for Choosing College Attended
Residence plan for Fall 1993
Future Goals

---

* Frequency results were also compiled for these variables

[0,1,2,3] Superscript numbers following variable names indicate the block in which the variable was placed for entry into regression analyses. First number indicates block for logistic regression predicting IEC-use; second number indicates entry block for linear regression predicting number of applications filed. "0" indicates variable was not used for that analysis.

TABLE 2:
SCHEMATA OF LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODEL WITH VARIABLES FOR PREDICTING STUDENTS' USE OF IECs

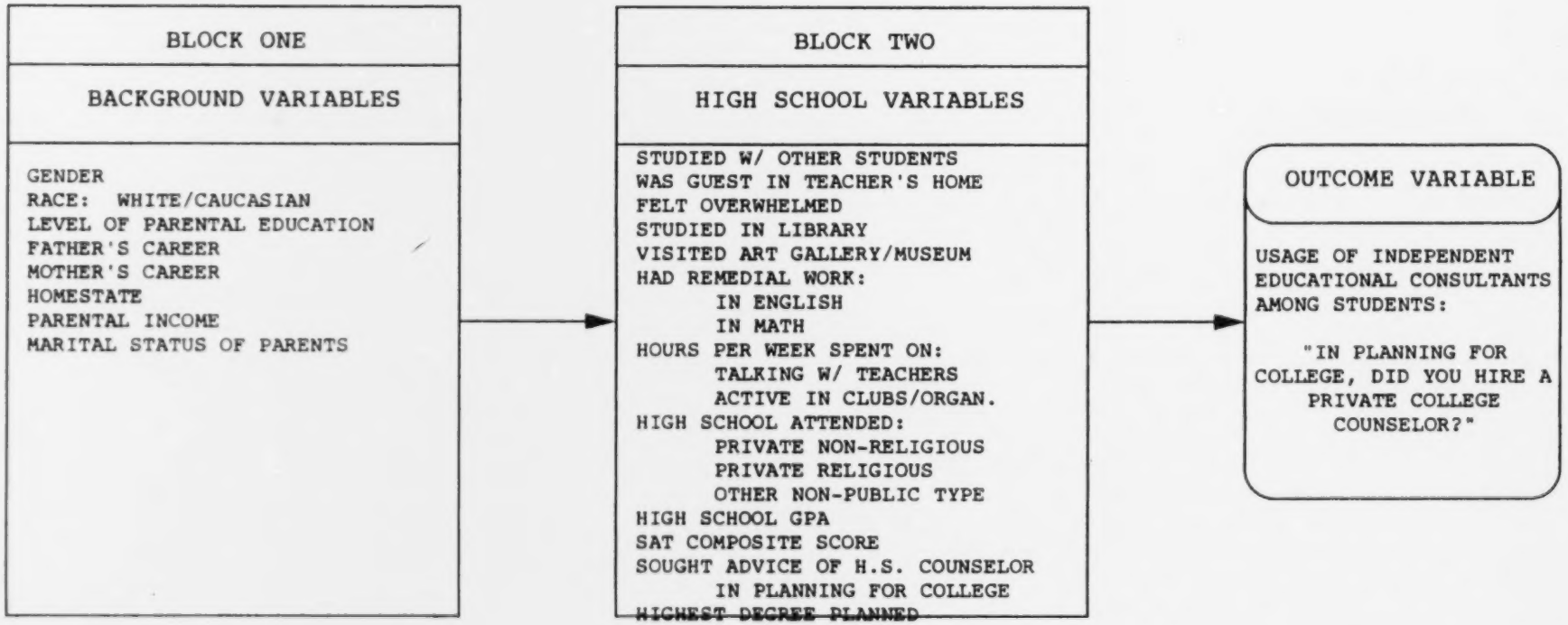

TABLE 3:
SCHEMATA OF BLOCKED, STEPWISE LINEAR REGRESSION MODEL WITH VARIABLES FOR PREDICTING NUMBER OF COLLEGE APPLICATIONS FILED

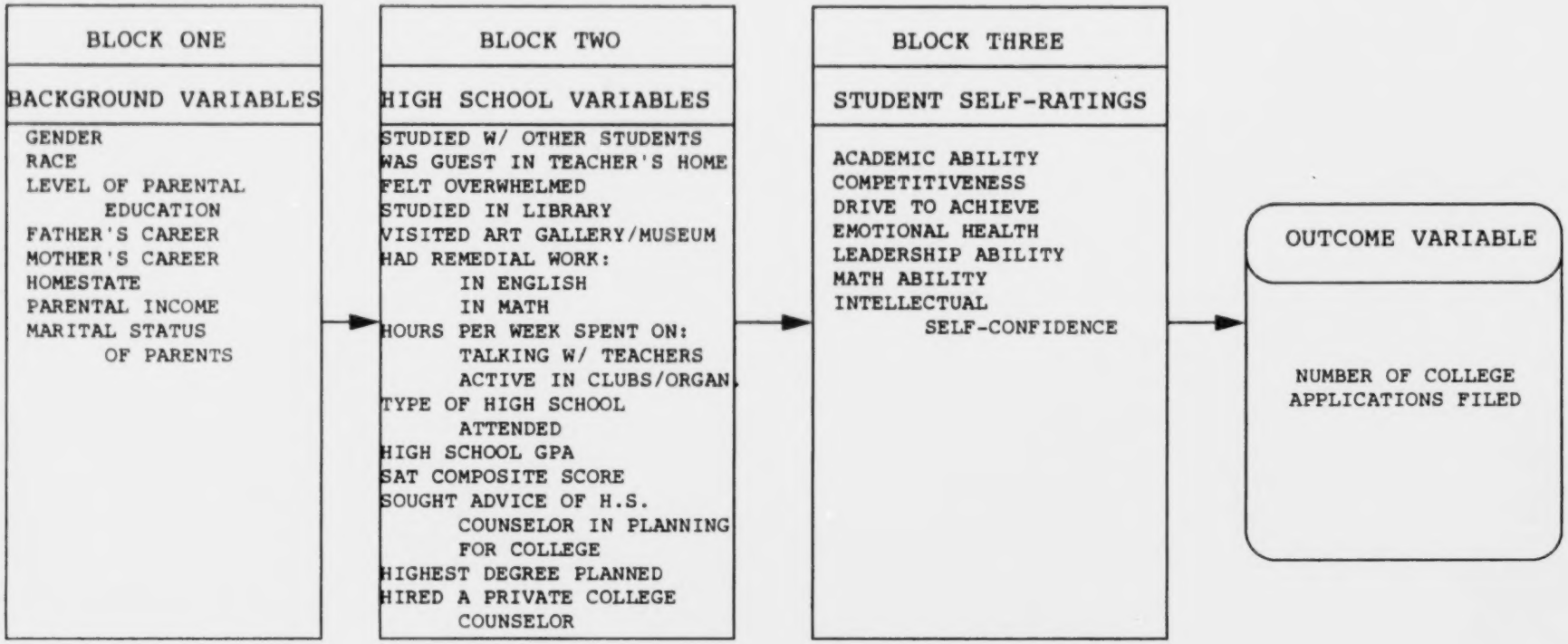

TABLE 4: Profiles of Independent Educational Consultants

VARIABLE	OVERALL	MEN	WOMEN
Total In Sample	157	37	120
% In Sample	--	24%	76%
PROFESSIONAL ISSUES			
Region			
North East	31.6%	45.9%	27.5%
Mid Atlantic States	7.1	8.1	6.7
South	5.2	2.7	5.8
Mid West	14.2	5.4	16.7
North West	5.2	8.1	5.0
California	27.1	10.8	31.7
South West	7.1	10.8	5.8
Hawaii	0.0	2.7	0.0
Alaska	0.0	2.7	0.0
Race			
White	98.1%	97.3%	98.3
Asian/Asian-American	0.6	0.0	0.8
African-American/Black	0.6	2.7	0.0
Chicano/Latino	0.6	0.0	0.8
Highest Degree Obtained			
Bachelors	20%	8.1%	23.3%
Masters	61	64.9	60.0
Doctorate	17	21.6	15.0
Previous Work Experience			
High School Counselor	35.0%	24.3%	38.3%
High School Teacher	31.8	32.4	31.7
High School Administrator	19.1	35.1	14.2
College Admissions	14.6	18.9	13.3
College Other	14.6	21.6	12.5
Mental Health Professional	12.7	10.8	13.3
College Teacher	12.1	18.9	10.0
College Financial Aid	1.3	0.0	1.7
Reasons Considered Very Important To Become An IEC			
Autonomy	54.4%	67.6%	50.8%
Could Work At Home	24.7	18.9	26.7
Money	13.3	24.3	10.0
Potential To Help Client	86.7	75.7	90.0
Use Of Specialized knowledge	82.3	83.8	81.7
% Belonging To Professional Association			
IECA	69.6%	45.9%	42.5%
National ACAC	61.4	59.5	62.5
Regional ACAC	43.7	64.9	71.7
% Who Annually Attend Conference			
IECA	65.8%	32.4%	35.8%
National ACAC	65.8	32.4	24.2
Regional ACAC	47.5	32.4	35.0

TABLE 4: Profiles of Independent Educational Consultants (Continued)

VARIABLE	OVERALL	MEN	WOMEN
OPERATIONS			
Average % Of College Advising	72.14%	65.61%	74.12%
% Who Are Incorporated	21.0%	37.8%	15.8%
Average College Visits Per Year	61	63	60
Minimum Credential Is Necessary	88.6%	78.4%	91.7%
Location Of Business			
% In Home-Based Office	63.9%	30.77%	54.84%
% In Non-Home Based Office	54.8	60.23	40.29
% In Work In Homes Of Clients	26.0	11.29	4.87
100% In Home-Based Office	32.3	13.50	38.30
100% In Non-Home Based Office	29.0	35.10	27.50
Average Fees			
Per Hour	86.13	80.21	88.50
Per Visit	149.87	105.00	160.23
Per Package	949.74	937.95	953.71
Average Number Of Clients			
1992-1993	41	51	39
1991-1992	38	38	38
1990-1991	35	34	5
Probono Work			
Conduct No Probono Work	10.0%	13.5%	8.3%
1 to 5%	48.0	40.5	50.0
6 to 10%	23.0	18.9	24.2
% Who Have Excellent Relationship With			
College Admissions Officers	57.0%	59.5%	56.7%
Public HS Counselors	39.2	32.4	40.8
Private HS Counselors	57.0	59.5	55.8
TYPE AND UTILITY OF IEC SERVICES			
Amount Of Time With Client			
Average (In Hours)	11-14	11-14	11-14
Average Minimum Amount Of Time	4.65	3	5
Average Maximum Amount Of Time	22.39	19	24
Availability During Off-Hours			
Weekends/Evenings	91.0%	94.6%	89.2
By Phone	89.0	91.9	87.5
In Person	84.0	84.2	84.2

TABLE 5: Services Offered By Independent Educational Consultants

Services Viewed As Very Important	From the Perspective of					
	The Client			The Consultant		
	Overall	Men	Women	Overall	Men	Women
Compiling A List Of Schools	87.1%	78.4%	89.2%	82.6	73.0	85.0
Narrowing A List Of Schools	72.8	73.0	73.3	74.7	75.7	75.0%
Alleviate Pressure of College Selection Process	71.0	62.2	73.3	78.1	59.5	83.3
Keep Students on Schedule	60.9	56.8	61.7	62.6	59.5	63.3
Meeting Deadlines	60.1	56.8	61.7	62.0	59.5	63.3
Special Circumstances (ie, LD)	50.6	48.6	51.7	70.3	51.4	76.7
Alternative to High School Counseling due to Dissatisfaction	50.3	48.6	50.8	60.0	59.5	60.0
Critique Application Essays	41.3	48.6	38.3	41.3	37.8	41.7
Choosing Between Colleges	35.5	45.9	32.5	40.0	37.8	40.8
Second Opinion on Options	31.0	35.1	30.0	38.1	40.5	37.5
Manage Peer Pressure	20.6	35.1	21.7	54.2	35.1	60.0
Advice with Financial Aid	20.0	37.8	15.0	25.8	32.4	24.2
Provide Contacts	14.2	21.6	11.7	21.9	24.3	20.8
Interview Coaching	12.9	13.5	12.5	17.4	18.9	16.7
Test Coaching (ie, SAT/ACT)	10.3	2.6	7.5	15.5	27.0	12.5

TABLE 6: STUDENTS WHO USE INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS

VARIABLE	SURVEY		
	IEC	CIRP	Difference*
PERCENT OF STUDENTS FROM:			
PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS	66.29%	68.2%	+1.91
PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOLS	22.56	17.7	-4.86
PRIVATE RELIGIOUS HIGH SCHOOLS	11.21	13.0	+1.79
GENDER			
MALE	50.62%	47.7%	-2.92
FEMALE	49.38	52.3	+2.92
RACIAL BREAKDOWN OF STUDENTS WHO IECs:			
CAUCASIAN	83.57%	83.5%	--
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	4.68	4.8	+0.12
AMERICAN INDIAN	0.47	1.2	+0.73
ASIAN-AMERICAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	7.24	5.1	-2.14
CHICANO/A OR OTHER LATINO/A	4.83	3.3	-1.53
OTHER	1.05	2.0	+0.95
LEVEL OF PARENTAL EDUCATION			
BOTH PARENTS ARE COLLEGE EDUCATED	74.61%	71.7%	-2.91
ONLY MOTHER IS COLLEGE EDUCATED	6.06	5.6	-0.46
ONLY FATHER IS COLLEGE EDUCATED	9.88	9.6	-3.28
NEITHER PARENT IS COLLEGE EDUCATED	10.19	13.0	+2.81
PARENTAL OCCUPATION			
PROFESSIONAL	79.29%	62.65%	-16.64
SKILLED OR TRADE	16.10	16.20	+ 0.10
UNSKILLED	3.51	0.95	- 2.56
FAMILY INCOME			
LESS THAN $25,000	6.86%	10.4%	+ 3.54
$25,001 TO $60,000	26.30	23.0	- 3.30
$60,001 TO $100,000	40.87	20.1	-20.77
OVER $100,001	26.92	46.4	+19.48

*DIFFERENCE IS CALCULATED BY SUBTRACTING THE IEC SURVEY ANSWER FROM THE CIRP SURVEY ANSWER (CIRP - IEC).

TABLE 7: SUMMARY OF COMPARATIVE FINDINGS: IECUs v. Non-IECUs:

I. IECUs ARE ADIVCE SEEKERS:

Variable:	IECU	Non-IECU	Difference*
Sought high school counselor's advice in planning for college	71.1%	35.4%	+35.7%
Took an SAT prep. course	66.6	44.2	+22.4
Had remedial work in math	21.9	10.9	+11.0
In choosing their final college, found advice of:			
h.s. counselor	43.7	36.4	+ 7.3
h.s. teacher	34.5	29.6	+ 4.9
to be somewhat or very important			

II. IECUs ARE FROM PRIVILEGED FAMILIES:

Variable:			
Father has a graduate degree	42.6%	25.4%	+17.2%
Mother has a graduate degree	30.7	25.3	+ 5.4
Father is a Businessman	38.4	27.3	+11.1
Parental income $\geq$ $75,000	57.7	28.9	+28.8
Financial aid from parents $\geq$$3000	72.6	50.0	+22.6

III. IECUs HAVE DIFFERENT COLLEGE APPLICATION BEHAVIORS:

Variable:			
Filed $\geq$ 5 college applications	60.2%	31.2%	+29.0%
Admitted to first choice college	68.6	72.6	- 4.0
Attending college >500 miles from home	34.1	16.2	+17.9
Attending private college	70.4	49.9	+20.5
Living in college dormitory	87.1	77.5	+ 9.6
Financial aid offer not important	59.8	43.5	+16.3
Low tuition not important	66.0	49.0	+17.0
Becoming more cultured is a reason for going to college	58.8	48.3	+10.5

IV. CONTROLLING FOR PARENTAL INCOME, IECUs REMAIN DISTINCT. AT INCOME LEVELS ABOVE $50,000 :**

Variable:			
SAT scores $\geq$ 1000	80.0%	76.3%	+ 3.7%
H.S. GPA $\leq$ B-	19.0	16.0	+ 3.0
$\geq$ 6 college applications filed	50.6	27.1	+23.5

* Difference is calculated by subtracting Non-IECU % from IECU%.

** These percentages represent the means for income brackets above $50,000

TABLE 8: SUMMARY TABLE OF LOGISTIC REGRESSION PREDICTING STUDENTS USE OF IECs (N=128,554)

VARIABLE:	% CHANGE IN ODDS OF USING AN IEC*
Background Characteristics	
Homestate: CA	138.5%
Father's Career: Lawyer	84.4
Father's Career: Doctor	71.0
Homestate: New Jersey	62.1
One or both parents deceased	46.9
Homestate: Connecticut	47.8
Father's Career: Businessman	44.5
Race: white/Caucasian	38.3
Homestate: New York	38.2
Father's Career: Engineer	-23.0
Homestate: Massachusetts	21.9
Parental Income	16.4
Parents separated or divorced	16.4
Mother's educational level	7.9
High School Experiences	
Had remedial work in math	74.6
Had remedial work in English	48.9
≥6 hrs/wk talking with teachers	31.6
Visited an art gallery/museum	23.0
Attend private nondenom. h.s.	22.0
Felt over-whelmed	15.9
High School GPA	-10.1
SAT Composite	0.0

* % change for a one-unit increase in the independent variable
$p < .0001$

TABLE 9: SUMMARY OF LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSES

VARIABLE BLOCK:	R^2 AFTER BLOCK* Total (N=104,741)	IECUs (N=3,677)	Non-IECUs (N=103,542)
Block 1			
Student Background Chracteristics	.08	.04	.08
Block 2			
High School Variables	.12	.06	.11
Block 3			
College Choice Variables	.13	.07	.12
Block 4			
Self-Ratings	.13	.07	.13

*(p<.001)

TABLE 10: DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF VARIABLES ON NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FILED FOR IECUs AND NON-IECUs

VARIABLE:	Beta* in for: IECUs (N=3,677)	Non-IECUs (N=103,542)
Student Background Variables:		
Homestate: MA	-.01	.03
Race: Chicano/a	-.02	.01
High School Variables:		
≥6 hrs/wk. talking with teachers	-.02	.01
Attend private nondenomination h.s.	-.01	.02
Self-Ratings:		
Math Ability	.01	-.03

*(p<.001)

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